



Nursery Guide



*Distribute copies of
this article to church
nursery coordinators.*

RECRUITING AND TRAINING NEW NURSERY VOLUNTEERS

The church nursery is a place where a spiritual foundation is laid for many children. It's also often the place where parents leave their babies for the very first time. Because this can be such a bittersweet time in the lives of parents with young children, it's important that nursery care is detailed, well-executed, clean, nurturing, and safe. And for that, there need to be nursery staff who have been recruited intentionally, trained thoroughly, and developed well.

Recruiting New Nursery Volunteers

When you are recruiting new volunteers to serve in your church's nursery, it is imperative to recruit people who are nurturing and attentive to the needs of babies and their families. Where do you start?

1. **Pray about whom to invite.** Remember, leaving children in your nursery is the one of the first times many parents entrust their

baby's care to someone else. Be intentional about who you invite to serve in your nursery. Pray and ask God who might be a good fit.

2. **Ask church staff or leadership for names.** Church leaders know the people they work with well. Many times, they'll have a great idea or two for people who would be gifted caregivers of little ones.
3. **Encourage current volunteers and workers to offer invitations.** Your current nursery workers may know others who would be a good fit in the nursery. Ask them to invite one or two others to consider this work.
4. **Check the church database.** Maybe there's a preschool teacher in your community or someone who works in daycare. Reach out to them to see if they might consider sharing their gifts in your nursery or know someone else who might be a good fit.
5. **Target specific demographics.** Invite empty-nesters and grandparents. Most do not have little ones at home and might enjoy spending time caring for babies and toddlers. Don't overlook youth and college students!
6. **When inviting someone to serve:**
 - Introduce yourself.
 - Share the vision of your children's ministry program and goals for the nursery.
 - Explain specifics of what you're looking for: volunteer opportunity/role; service hour needs; and frequency of serving (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - Tell them why you are asking them specifically. Were they personally recommended? Was their name an answer to your prayer? Did you ask them because of a specific skill?
 - Provide next steps if they want to learn more. Include your phone number and/or email as contact information.

- Give them a deadline to respond to your request. Give them at least two weeks to pray about how they should proceed.

Training New Nursery Volunteers

When training your volunteers, think about a couple of different options: Group Training and Hands-On Training.

If you get your new volunteers together for **Group Training**, offer fun ways for your team to get to know each other that revolve around the nursery. A few ideas include taste-testing baby food, a doll diapering relay, and bottle juggling. Then review policies and procedures regarding your ministry context. These things include, but are not limited to:

- Arrival time
- Diapering frequency and how-tos
- Sanitizing toys and surfaces
- Feeding
- Teaching materials
- Safety and security
- Communicating with parents
- Sick children
- Cry policy
- Absentee/lateness procedures
- Positive interactions with families
- Emergency procedures

For **Hands-On Training**, pair new volunteers with veterans to spend time working in the nursery. Allow opportunities for them to observe, have hands-on experiences with classroom duties, and ask questions about what they've seen, why things are scheduled the way they are, and so on.

Developing New Nursery Volunteers

Once your volunteers are in place, be intentional about investing in them. This step can determine how short-term or long-term volunteers serve with you. If they don't feel like valued members of your team, they may quit early on. It's important to invest in your volunteers **spiritually** and **personally**.

Spiritually

- Provide a leaders' devotional for each of the twenty Bible stories in the Frolic First Bible. Help them to seek God in prayer and study the scripture passage before teaching the material to the children.
- As you send out lessons or emails during the week, continue to impress upon them that serving in the nursery is more than providing babysitting. You are helping little ones build their spiritual foundation.
- Boost community with others in your church. Offer them opportunities to attend new members' classes, Bible studies, and small groups.
- Encourage them to attend worship services regularly, and to spend time in prayer and Bible study.
- Pass along quality spiritual resources—such as podcasts and reading materials—to help them grow in their faith.

Personally

- Check in with them regularly outside of your ministry context. Ask them how you can support them in prayer.
- Meet with them over a meal or coffee and talk about their joys and challenges in life.
- Keep them invested in the ministry by asking their opinions on what is strong, and what suggestions they might have for making improvements.
- Have fun together! Go out to a movie, a concert, or another enjoyable activity.

As your nursery volunteers serve by sharing their gifts and passion, be sure to invest in them, and help them develop and strengthen their skills through training. You will then set healthy patterns of service and leadership in place.